

Department of Human Services

Prepared by the
DHS Office of
Communications
(517) 373-7394



*Important story at this spot

Articles in Today's Clips Tuesday, March 18, 2008

(Be sure to maximize your screen to read your clips)

<u>TOPIC</u>	<u>PAGE</u>
*Audit	2
Child Abuse/Neglect/Protection	3
Day Care	4
Visitation	5-6
Juvenile Justice	7-9
Vulnerable Adults	10-14
Health Care	15-19
Food Assistance	20
EITC	21-22
Homelessness	23
Charities	24-27
Pew Center Report	28

[Print Page](#)

Union responds to DHS auditor

Tuesday, March 18, 2008 10:06 AM EDT

LANSING - The recently-released Auditor General's negative report on the effectiveness of the Department of Human Services' ability to provide oversight for the various public assistance programs came as no surprise to employees at the more than 110 DHS local offices.

The report concluded that DHS was only moderately effective in providing oversight to these programs.

"These results are to be expected when an agency attempts to provide services without sufficient staff. Caseloads of upwards of 600 to 800 are not unusual," stated Sandra Parker, president of UAW Local 6000.

Local 6000 represents employees within the DHS.

The report found that 87 percent of the local office management reported that low staffing levels and high caseloads were a factor in mispayment rates.

Throughout the state, many workers continue to work during breaks and lunch hours just to insure that services are provided to those in need.

Staffing reports indicate that there are more than 764 vacant positions within the 2,800 workers who manage public assistance cases.

DHS continues to put false hopes on a computer system to resolve the high caseloads and the backlog of requests for services.

Unfortunately, the new system is months behind schedule and is of questionable reliability

The Auditor General recommends that the DHS analyze caseworker responsibilities and coordinate with Local 6000 to identify and implement strategies to improve effectiveness.

"Local 6000 is ready to work hand in hand with DHS to improve the delivery of these services. We have been saying for years that it is the front line worker who knows what works and what does not," Parker said. DHS continues to work with a restricted budget and lacks the resources to fill many of the vacant positions.



Man accused of assaulting girl

Tuesday, March 18, 2008

Jackson County sheriff's investigators allege a 27-year-old Vandercook Lake man sexually assaulted an 8-year-old girl early today.

A contingent of deputies responded to the 911 call at 3:53 a.m. and tracked the suspect to a nearby home, with the help of a city police canine team.

The suspect, on parole for criminal sexual conduct, was arrested and jailed for parole violation. Criminal sexual assault charges are pending.

"The victim's mother discovered the act taking place," sheriff's officials said in a news release. "The father then administered a beating to the suspect."

The suspect, who is related to the family, had been celebrating St. Patrick's Day with the family and appeared intoxicated, according to deputies.

The girl was treated at Foote Hospital and remains with her parents, officials said.

-- Staff report

©2008 Jackson Citizen Patriot

© 2008 Michigan Live. All Rights Reserved.



Daycare Investigation

13-year-old boy faces sexually abuse charges involving a child at a Lansing daycare

Posted: 6:31 PM Mar 17, 2008

Last Updated: 7:26 PM Mar 17, 2008

Reporter: Tiffany Teasley

Email Address: Tiffany.Teasley@wilx.com



Daycares aren't supposed to be danger zones. But that's just what this Lansing home day care allegedly became in February.

A | A | A

"Their mother contacted the police department and said that her kids had reported some things to her that she thought sounded unusual and she thought she should report it to the police," said Detective Teresa Eisfelder who handled the case.

Michigan Department of Human Services shut down the daycare owned by Michelle Roper on March 6. After a three week investigation ☐ Roper's 13-year-old son was charged last Thursday with one count of criminal sexual conduct after allegedly sexually abusing a 5-year-old girl. Police say a 3-year-old girl could have also been involved.

"The report that I have states that the 13-year-old who lives in the house had another child, a 5-year-old child, perform a sex act on him for candy," Eisfelder said.

Eisfelder says it's likely that children at the daycare were alone with Roper's son at times; similar accusations were reported to the Department of Human Services just a year ago.

"March 2007 there was a prior accusation of children in the home, children who lived in the home; inappropriate contact with kids coming into the daycare," Eisfelder said.

Roper didn't want to speak on camera without her attorney. Her son is now at Ingham County Youth Home until a preliminary hearing is scheduled.

Find this article at:

<http://www.wilx.com/news/headlines/16763591.html>

☐ Check the box to include the list of links referenced in the article.

Copyright © 2002-2008 - Gray Television Group, Inc.



Renee Pagel's parents fight to see grandchildren

Tuesday, March 18, 2008

By John Agar

The Grand Rapids Press

GRAND RAPIDS -- After the slaying of his wife in 2006, Michael Pagel and his three children left the area because of a campaign Renee Pagel's friends started to find her killer.

He moved to the Houghton Lake area "to protect the children from the activities of certain people involved with the Renee Pagel Web site," he said in court documents obtained Monday.

Pagel's statements came in response to a court battle over grandparent visitation by Renee Pagel's father, Forrest DeMaagd.

In particular, Pagel said, he was concerned about the relationship between DeMaagd's other daughter, Michelle DeMaagd, and those behind the Web site.

Renee Pagel was fatally stabbed Aug. 5, 2006, in her Courtland Township home.

Her friends think Pagel killed his estranged wife. He is featured on the Web site as the person of interest, but he has steadfastly denied any role in the killing. His attorney has said Pagel was at his mother's with the children when Renee Pagel was killed.

Along with setting up the site "whokilledrenee.com," friends have put up billboards on the unsolved slaying and posted fliers throughout the state. They also have sent many mailings, which are at the center of an investigation into harassment claims by Pagel's family.

Chris Crandle, a Rockford mother of four, set up the Web site. She said she will do whatever it takes to find her friend's killer.

After her death, Forrest DeMaagd filed a complaint, asking for visitation with his three grandchildren. He was concerned his daughter would become a "distant memory" to her 8-year-old twins and 4-year-old if kept from her side of the family.

On Monday, Crandle waited outside a Kent County courtroom for a visitation hearing handled by attorneys behind closed doors. Michael Pagel did not attend.

"We just think that it's tragic," Crandle said. "He is trying so hard to keep the kids from Renee's family. We're just here to show some support for them. They just want to see their grandkids. They love these kids."

Crandle acknowledged she is one of at least two people under investigation by state police for harassment. She said she is not concerned and insisted she is fighting for justice for her friend. As part of her involvement in this case, she has met with families of murder victims and organized a vigil last fall. She hopes to start a support group.

In his court filings, Michael Pagel said two people responsible for the Web site are under investigation and could "possibly be charged criminally for harassment of (his) family."

Forrest DeMaagd and his wife declined to comment after three hours of negotiations between attorneys. A visitation agreement was reached, but details were not available.

Kent County sheriff's Detective E.J. Johnson has called Michael Pagel the only suspect in his estranged wife's death.

Send e-mail to the author: jagar@grpress.com

©2008 Grand Rapids Press

© 2008 Michigan Live. All Rights Reserved.



THE ANN ARBOR NEWS

Boy, 11, gets probation in sexual incident on bus

Judge orders family to undergo random testing, counseling

Tuesday, March 18, 2008

BY TOM TOLEN

The Ann Arbor News

An 11-year-old boy involved in a sexual assault against another boy aboard a Howell School bus was placed on two years probation Monday.

He and his parents appeared for a dispositional hearing in Livingston County Probate Court, where Judge Carol Hackett Garagiola ordered the family to undergo random drug and alcohol testing. They were also ordered to have counseling, and the boy may not be alone with other children under 13.

The boy had earlier pleaded guilty to a charge of gross indecency between males, in exchange for dropping charges of first-and-second-degree criminal sexual conduct.

A 10-year-old boy also charged with criminal sexual conduct in the case has maintained his innocence and may go to trial.

Livingston County Prosecutor David Morse said his office never approached the case with the intention of seeking punitive action, but rather wanted to ensure the boy and his family receive the proper help. He added the incident was more bullying than a sexual assault.

"There was no question it was sexual in nature, but the evaluation found it was not predatory," Morse said. "The sexual activity was more of bullying, or exploring, or experimentation (and we felt) there was a low likelihood of re-offending."

In the May 2007 incident, a 7-year-old Howell elementary school student was assaulted by the two older boys, ages 9 and 11 at the time.

Morse said while the victim and his family have suffered as a result, so have the other boys and their families. "This has been traumatic for everyone," he said.

The prosecutor said he agrees with the random drug-and-alcohol-testing order in the sentence, although he emphasized there is no evidence the boy was using drugs or alcohol. "Alcohol or drugs can exacerbate a situation, and we feel this (testing) will decrease the likelihood of that happening," he said.

An order for the family to make arrangements for the boy's return to school, with supervision, was also part of the disposition. However, acting Howell Superintendent Lynn Parrish said Monday afternoon that to her knowledge, the boy, now a middle-school student, is already back in class.

"A safety plan is in place, (but) the larger issue is how much school he missed," she said.

Parrish added the family has requested that no information on the boy be released, in accordance with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act.

The other boy is scheduled to go on trial April 16, unless a resolution can be reached at an April 7 settlement conference. "We're at an impasse," Morse said.

Tom Tolen can be reached at ttolen@livingstoncommunitynews.com or at 810-844-2009.



Tuesday, March 18, 2008

Rapper in the making: Ex-inmate Nate Abraham builds life around music

Jennifer Chambers / The Detroit News
DETROIT

athaniel Abraham wants a future in music. His notorious past is supplying the fabric for such a dream.

At age 11, Abraham gunned down a man. Convicted of murder, he spent the next 10 years behind bars, his formative years in juvenile detention.

Now, more than a year since his release from state custody, Abraham is writing a new chapter in his life.

The 22-year-old Pontiac native recorded a hip-hop/rap song Dec. 27 with music producer Detail, and has signed his first recording contract with Hits Entertainment Group from Detroit.

Neither Abraham nor his attorney, Kim Ward, would disclose how much the deal is for, other than to say an album is due out this fall.

The single, "What It Is," delves into Abraham's fatherless life, his time in the system, which he calls "the ring." It recalls the nights he cried himself to sleep and how he survived his confinement.

It's also a rant against the media that clamored around him during the sensational criminal case in which Abraham faced but dodged an adult prison sentence. The song attacks the naysayers who predicted a quick fall for Abraham.

"A lot of people didn't expect me to be out here this long," Abraham said from inside Harmonie Park Studios, home of Grammy award-winning producers whose client list includes Aretha Franklin, Eminem, Sean Combs (formerly known as Diddy), the Four Tops and Grand Funk Railroad. "They said I couldn't do it. In the last verse I really started venting and expressing myself."

A helping hand

Abraham, whose case was watched internationally and whose decade-long rehabilitation sentence was considered an experiment in the criminal justice community, got his chance to pursue his dream of recording music through successful real estate developer and Detroit philanthropist Herb Strather, who met Abraham in church.

Strather, who is credited with bringing casinos to Detroit, says he took a chance on Abraham because he thinks the young man has talent.

"I'm a youth advocate. Nate became part of our church community and once he did that, all avenues are open to him," Strather said. "We think he is a hot talent and he's great looking."

Arriving at a recent interview dressed in black jeans, white sneakers, an oversized camouflage coat and a black ball cap, Abraham says he wants to make a genuine record with a new sound and to be recognized as a lyricist and a person who "makes you think and picks your brain with his music."

Yet four months ago, Abraham made his first foray into music in a Pontiac music studio, recording songs with graphic lyrics that spoke of violence, dealing drugs and killing people. The gangsta rap, which includes vocals with other unidentified people, extensively used the N-word.

Abraham declined to comment on those recordings.

"I do believe in artists venting and expressing themselves because you have to get that out," Abraham said of the music he is writing and recording. "You are going through something in life and it comes out (in the music) exactly how you feel."

Focus turns to music, writing

Looking back on the year, Abraham says he tried college, one semester at Wayne State University last fall, but chose not to reapply to focus on his music. He is also writing stories that he hopes to put into a book.

Abraham has his own apartment in Oakland County and has worked a series of odd jobs, but has not taken any full-time employment. A Detroit church that offered to support Abraham after his release continues to do so now, Abraham says.

He says he spends some time in Pontiac, but most of his old friends are in prison or are dead.

As for the pink pinstriped suit he wore to court on the day of his release from the W.J. Maxey Boys Training School, Abraham says he regrets the choice. If he could do it over again, he would wear something more conservative. The suit has stayed in the closet except for a trip to church on Easter last year.

Abraham, whose favorite pastime is watching old movies, especially gangster films, describes how people stop him on the street -- often strangers -- to encourage him to focus on his music and stay positive. He calls them his fan club.

Daniel Bagdade, Abraham's criminal attorney for nearly 10 years, has encouraged him to keep a low profile while he moves his life forward. He sees a bright kid with tremendous insight for someone who spent his childhood incarcerated.

"No kid had been locked up behind bars from the age of 11 to 21," Bagdade said. "That will continue to have an influence on Nate. The lyrics in the song showed that. It's part of who he is. All of us have experiences as we grow up and they stick with. For better or worse this is who Nate is."

Time will be the judge

Deborah Carley, the Oakland County prosecutor who was part of an enormous team of lawyers monitoring Abraham's rehabilitation for 10 years, said it's simply too early to say that Abraham is totally rehabilitated.

"I think it's a long-term observation period, it's not just a year or two years. It's what's going to happen in five or 10 years. The music I heard was alarming. It talks about drugs, crime, shooting people in the head, the N-word," Carley said of the recordings made in Pontiac. A disc of the material was anonymously sent to her.

Carley and Bagdade told The Detroit News last year that the state of Michigan offered Abraham an unheard-of deal that included free rent and college tuition for up to two years after his release. Asked what he had been promised, Abraham declined to elaborate other to say "They reneged on the deal."

News of the offer -- which state officials first denied then admitted -- enraged the public and led to calls for an investigation. In the end Abraham, a felon no longer under the state's jurisdiction, was reimbursed about \$1,200 for a security deposit and rent at an apartment and some furniture and food.

Recently during a lunch in the St. Regis hotel, Abraham was introduced to legendary Detroit entertainer Abdul "Duke" Fakir of the Four Tops.

"Determination and commitment are the name of the game," Fakir told Abraham. "You have to learn everything you can about music and go at it, write it down, from your perspective."

Abraham says that's exactly what he plans to do. He wants to prove people wrong and his music has given him a voice to do that.

"I felt like I paid my dues. No resentment or animosity toward what I left behind me. My objective is to make music," he said.

"Nothing is going to distract me now."

You can reach Jennifer Chambers at (248) 647-7402 or jchambers@detnews.com.

Find this article at:

<http://www.detnews.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20080318/METRO/803180371>

☐ Check the box to include the list of links referenced in the article.

© Copyright 2008 The Detroit News. All rights reserved.

Nest-egg theft shakes victim, 91

by John S. Hausman | The Muskegon Chronicle

Sunday March 16, 2008, 8:35 AM



Chrystal Miracle

Viola Olsen was 13 when the stock market crashed in 1929. She grew up in the Depression, when money was scarce and financial security a distant dream. "When I was going to school, it seemed like everybody had nicer things than I did," she recalled. "I always wanted some elk-skin shoes. I never got them."

She also learned to believe that "honesty is the best policy," and trusted that other people felt that way.

But this week, a young mother who took advantage of that trust learned the price tag for looting Olsen's lifetime of savings was a stretch in prison.

In her early years, Olsen learned to work hard, scrimp and save, save, save: coupons and string, bags and papers, and any money not needed for essentials. After she married and entered the work force, there were no vacations, no fancy clothes, no extravagances.

But together, she and her husband, Robert Olsen, successfully raised five children and saved their money. Viola Olsen helped support the family with jobs that included caring for the elderly, serving as "house mother" for nurse trainees at the old Mercy Hospital, and packing parachutes at World War II-era Brunswick Corp.

"We worked hard for that money," she said.

By last April, 90 years old and widowed about two years, she was living alone on Muskegon's west side and supporting herself frugally, mostly off

her Social Security checks. Over a lifetime of work, the Olsens had accumulated a comfortable nest egg that was still intact after some 25 years of retirement, held in various investments plus a checking account with some \$30,000.

Then she brought her income taxes to the Jackson Hewitt tax-preparation office on Henry Street. There she met a helpful young woman working as a receptionist. The woman helped with Olsen's taxes, unraveling a confusing point that no one else at the office could figure out, Olsen recalled.

The 29-year-old Spring Lake resident — her name was Crystal Miracle — befriended Olsen. A professed committed Christian and a married mother of four young children, Miracle made herself useful to the older lady. "She said, if you need anything done, just call me," Olsen said.

Before long, Miracle had persuaded Olsen to invite her to her home and was helping her run errands.

"I thought she was a very nice lady," Olsen said. "She WAS a nice lady — but there was something behind it. ... She thought my bank book looked pretty good."

At some point during their friendship, the nice young woman persuaded Olsen to sign a series of blank checks, probably with the understanding Miracle would use them to pay Olsen's bills, investigators believe. Olsen doesn't remember doing so, but authorities are convinced that's what happened.

Instead, Miracle filled in her own name as payee, wrote in varying amounts in the thousands, and cashed them, one by one, over a period of about four months.

Authorities believe she used the money to pay her own bills, make overdue mortgage payments and buy a used car for \$5,000. They believe her husband, who didn't handle the family finances, had no knowledge of the embezzlements.

By August, Miracle had stolen more than \$29,000 of Olsen's savings, nearly draining that bank account. At that point, Olsen noticed something was wrong with the account. She called her daughter, Peggy Anderson, for help, and together they went to Olsen's bank to sort it out.

That launched a Muskegon police investigation that after a few weeks led to Miracle's arrest — and the unraveling of a criminal past.

Miracle's most recent prior conviction was the misdemeanor theft of a 5-year-old boy's backpack, sweatshirt and figurine that was in the backpack, stolen while Miracle was working in December 2002 as a substitute kindergarten teacher at Calvary Christian School in Fruitport Township.

Earlier, in 1999, she stole a purse from a church in Wayne County, where she grew up. She pleaded guilty to larceny in a building, a felony.

She got probation in both cases, with an order to pay restitution of \$2,839 in the Wayne County case. In that case, charges of stealing checks and credit-card fraud were dropped in exchange for the guilty plea.

In the Olsen case, Miracle was charged last September with felony embezzlement from a vulnerable adult and being a second-time habitual felon. On Jan. 26 she pleaded no contest — not an admission of guilt, but treated as a guilty plea at sentencing.

The case concluded with her sentencing Monday to prison for 15 months to 7 1/2 years. The sentence might have been stiffer had Miracle not already paid \$23,000 in restitution, with the remaining \$6,187 promised soon.

Muskegon County Circuit Judge Timothy G. Hicks ordered that the full amount be paid.

At the sentencing, Senior Assistant Muskegon County Prosecutor Timothy Maat called Olsen "a trusting soul and an honest woman... (Mrs.) Miracle placed herself in a position of trust. She is cunning and manipulative ... I think she's a very devious person."

Olsen wanted to be in court but couldn't, because she is convalescing at a local nursing home from a broken hip. Her daughter, Peggy Anderson, spoke on her behalf.

Anderson described her mother's girlhood poverty, her hard work and saving ways, and her shattered trust.

"She trusted that the girl doing her income tax would do it honestly and precisely, never dreaming that she would drain her bank account," Anderson said.

Defense attorney Michael Van Tubergen noted that Miracle had already paid \$23,000 of the restitution and had made arrangements to pay the rest soon. He attributed the thefts to "extreme financial pressure" because "times have been tough."

The money was used to take the Miracles' home out of foreclosure and to pay bills, he said.

Van Tubergen asked for a sentence of restitution and probation on electronic tether, arguing that incarceration would harm the couple's four young children and achieve nothing.

Miracle, now 30, spoke softly and briefly in court, weeping as she apologized.

The judge was influenced by Miracle's history.

"This is not an isolated incident," Hicks said, noting her pattern of "deceitful, dishonest, lying and criminal behavior" that he said was at odds with

Miracle's profession of Christian ideals. Hicks exceeded the state Probation Department's recommendation of a 180-day county jail sentence.

In an interview Friday, Olsen, now 91 years old, spoke of her sense of betrayal, how the experience hurt and changed her, and the lesson she took from it.

She said she was "terribly" hurt when she learned Miracle had been embezzling from her. "I was in bed for two days before I got over it — partially. I said, 'Oh, this can't happen to me.' But you never know."

Any warmth for Miracle has vanished. "She was a nice person," Olsen said. "But then, they say they all are before they do something like that, to try to win you over.

"She was a pro."

Olsen has become less trusting and learned to "be very, very careful — very, very!"

And she hopes Miracle's punishment bears out a motto Olsen has always tried to live her life by.

"Honesty is the best policy. We always believed that in our family."

Livonia woman charged in mother's death

By ZLATI MEYER • FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER • March 17, 2008

-
-
- [Print this page](#)
- [E-mail this article](#)

- Share this article:
- [Del.icio.us](#)
- [Facebook](#)
- [Digg](#)
- [Reddit](#)
- [Newsvine](#)
- [What's this?](#)

A 49-year-old woman was arraigned Monday in 16th District Court on murder charges in the death of her elderly mother in the home they shared.

ADVERTISEMENT

Mary Beth Connolly is accused of pushing Betty Connolly down the basement stairs in their house on the 9000 block of Hartel on March 9 after they had a fight, which was part of an ongoing dispute, according to police. The 82-year-old died of head trauma.

"The daughter had told us she'd fallen down the stairs, but at that time, the daughter had attempted to commit suicide," Livonia Police Lt. Greg Winn said today. "It was not clear at that point if it was an accident and the daughter was distraught over the mother just dying," but investigators later discovered the truth.

The younger Connolly, who was arrested Friday, is charged with first-degree, second-degree and felony murder and elder abuse. She's being held without bond at the Wayne County Jail until her March 27 preliminary exam.

This marks the first homicide in 2008 in Livonia, a city which consistently ranks among the safest in the United States according to federal crime statistics.

Find this article at:

<http://www.freep.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20080317/NEWS02/80317057>

☐ Check the box to include the list of links referenced in the article.



Coalition is awarded \$2,500 grant

Tuesday, March 18, 2008

The Jackson County Safe Sleep Coalition has been awarded a \$2,500 grant by the Jackson Junior Welfare League. The coalition, in conjunction with the Jackson County Health Department, will administer the grant.

The funds will be used to purchase and screen-print Infant Safe Sleep T-shirts or onesies with a safe-sleep message of "Naptime, Nighttime, Face up to Wake up."

The onesies will be distributed to parents of all infants born at Foote Hospital.

The intent is that they will serve as a visual reminder for caregivers to place babies on their backs to sleep, a recommendation from the American Academy of Pediatrics as the safest way for babies to sleep.

The Safe Sleep Coalition was established in 2004 and comprises several area organizations committed to reducing the number of preventable infant deaths related to unsafe sleep practices and environments.

The coalition is working on several strategies to increase public awareness of safe-sleep issues in Jackson County. These strategies include the onesie program, community provider presentations on safe sleep, parent/caregiver presentations and The Babies Enjoying Safe Sleep Crib Program providing low income families safe cribs for their babies.

For more information, call Louise Bernstein at 768-1631 or Aimee Fors at 768-2123.

©2008 Jackson Citizen Patriot

© 2008 Michigan Live. All Rights Reserved.



Tuesday, March 18, 2008

Editorial

End foot-dragging, solve Wayne State-DMC feud

The Detroit News

The financial dispute between Wayne State University's Medical School and the Detroit Medical Center threatens to do some serious damage to the medical school. It's time for an intervention.

Gov. Jennifer Granholm appointed a facilitator in 2006 to help the two institutions work out their problems, and her mediator is still working behind the scenes to encourage an agreement in this new dispute. Both the Detroit Medical Center (DMC), a complex of eight hospitals and other institutions, and the medical school are key to the health of Metro Detroit.

The governor has no legal authority to order autonomous institutions with their own governing boards to do anything. But she should use her bully pulpit and the leverage of state dollars both parties count on to create more public pressure for a resolution. The medical school is a state asset that needs to be preserved.

The DMC has unilaterally suspended payments to the medical school for the care of Medicaid patients. These payments amount to about \$12 million annually. The DMC says it fears it may be overpaying the university's physicians in violation of federal rules. As a result, Wayne State has announced the layoff of 26 physicians and staffers at the DMC, its teaching partner, and says there may be more.

In the meantime, the school and hospital complex have agreed to an outside financial examination of the overpayment issue, with the hospital complex paying for half the cost, according to a DMC spokeswoman. And the university has voluntarily called in the relevant federal inspector general's office to clear it of possible wrongdoing in accepting the payments.

These are all positive developments, but things are not moving quickly enough to prevent damage to the medical school. The school and the DMC have agreed on a firm to do the evaluation on the Medicaid overpayment issue but are still arguing about the terms of the inquiry.

Wayne State has requested that the Medicaid funds be placed in escrow, but negotiations have not been completed on how the escrow account will be structured.

It should be noted that the state Medicaid director has said he does not believe the payments to Wayne State Medical School are a violation of the program's regulations.

Kenneth Lee, associate dean for finance at the medical school, also contends that in addition to the \$12 million at issue in the Medicaid payments, the DMC owes Wayne State \$6.7 million in payments for other contracts and commitments. About \$2.7 million of this total goes back to the agreement facilitated by the governor's mediator two years ago, he said. This kind of dispute is putting the medical school in a cash-flow bind that could lead to still more layoffs, according to Lee.

This financial uncertainty makes it hard for the medical school to recruit faculty as well as simply sustain day-to-day operations, he adds.

Stephen D'Arcy, DMC board chairman, says Wayne State also owes the DMC money, and the hospital complex is withholding funds on back bills until the issue is resolved. The hospital complex has promised that no patients will be denied care and that physicians who are laid off from the medical school practice will be hired by the hospital.

But why should the medical school's hospital practice be so disrupted?

An evaluation on the Medicaid payments ought to go forward without conditions on either side. The payments should be escrowed quickly. And high-level talks between board members of both institutions should be focused on the quickest possible end to all aspects of the dispute.

Find this article at:

<http://www.detnews.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20080318/OPINION01/803180311>

☐ Check the box to include the list of links referenced in the article.

© Copyright 2008 The Detroit News. All rights reserved.

MIRS

March 17, 2008

WSU-DMC Battle Could Mean State Bailout

Following a long, ugly spat with the Detroit Medical Center (DMC), Wayne State University's (WSU)

School of Medicine is pink-slipping 26 doctors and other staff and seeking a state bailout of at least \$10 million.

Several well-placed sources tell *MIRS* the DMC has made a similar request to the Legislature. DMC

Spokeswoman Rebecca **CHRISTENSEN** denied that the hospital has requested money from the Legislature.

The DMC is withholding \$12 million from the WSU med school, just the latest squabble between the hospital and its teaching partner. The hospital started the payment stop last month for Medicare payments.

Medical School Dean Robert **MENTZER** met March 5 with Lt. Gov. John **CHERRY**, Senate Majority Leader

Mike **BISHOP** and House Speaker Andy **DILLON** (D-Redford Twp.) to ask for a \$10 to \$20 million

shot in the arm from the Legislature. Mentzer was accompanied by former U.S. Rep. Joe **SCHWARZ**, who

headed a bipartisan task force last year on the ongoing DMC-WSU dispute. Schwarz called this a "top-level" priority for the Legislature. This may be the only way Wayne State will

get the money it says it needs. The quid pro quo might be for DMC and WSU to bury the hatchet.

Some Senate Republicans have told *MIRS* they're sympathetic to the medical school, although no commitments have been made.

Kenneth **LEE**, WSU Medical School associate dean of finances, stressed the school is "not broke, but we

can't continue to lose money without a recovery," referring to DMC withholding funds.

The hospital claims the \$12 million is an overpayment to doctors and could violate federal Stark law. The DMC claims Wayne State is already paid for indigent care under new state legislation to the tune of \$17 million and is double-dipping.

"(Wayne State) is still \$5 to \$7 million ahead. The layoffs are not related to this," Christensen said.

"They're just trying to use this to get more money."

She said Wayne State is currently under review by the United States Office of Inspector General (OIG), so DMC couldn't reinstate the payments even if it wanted to.

Wayne State disputes the double-dipping claim. Lee said the school has called the OIG because it's so confident it's in the right. Lee said nothing is stopping the DMC from putting money owed to WSU into escrow in the meantime and says the hospital isn't doing so.

Lee said the DMC is also withholding \$6.7 million in other contracts with the med school.

"Without question, they're not meeting their contractual commitments," Lee said.

He added, "They keep coming up with more excuses not to come up with the money."

More layoffs could be made in the coming weeks.

"There will be absolutely no reduction in care to patients as a consequence of Wayne State School of Medicine's decision today that it plans to begin laying off doctors," said DMC Board Chairman Stephen

D'ARCY. "If Wayne State chooses to lay off doctors, the DMC will move immediately to hire them or to find replacement doctors. We will not allow a single patient to go without care."

There seems to be little hope for the DMC and Wayne State to patch things up on their own.

"They are nowhere close to an agreement," said Schwarz, who is still trying to mediate. "Their fiscal

health and operational health are critical for Southeast Michigan and the rest of the state. The sooner it's resolved the better."

This is only the latest speed bump in the two institutions' rocky relationship. Things came to a boil at the

end of 2006 and appeared to have been calmed with the intervention of the task force on health care in

Southeast Michigan to which Gov. Jennifer **GRANHOLM** signed on.

Schwarz said he's disappointed at the continued infighting even after the panel's findings.

Several WSU residency programs have left the DMC — urology, otolaryngology and dermatology — for other hospitals. Schwarz said the pair also has different visions for obstetrics and gynecology.

The DMC also actively recruited Michigan State University's osteopathic medicine program. The MSU board signed off on it.

What it comes down to, is the DMC and Wayne State have differing views on medicine and are jockeying for power to see their vision prevail.

At the core, Schwarz said, the goal should be to provide health care for the core city of Detroit and its uninsured and underinsured patients.



Tuesday, March 18, 2008

Editorial

Adopt twice-monthly food stamp payments

Grocers say monthly payouts create distribution problems

The Detroit News

State and federal officials should allow the distribution of food stamps twice a month in Michigan.

The change will help many stamp recipients budget through the month. And twice-monthly payments also give a break to participating grocers, who say the current once-a-month allocations cause staffing, inventory and cash flow problems.

The amount of money involved is no small sum. Some 1.2 million Michigan residents receive food stamps -- one in eight.

Recipients get an average \$88 a month, or about \$1 a meal.

Grocers say they make 80 percent of their food-stamp related sales in the first 10 days of each month. Then sales dip sharply.

Wholesalers and suppliers have reportedly stopped serving some areas because of the lack of steady demand for products and some stores had had to lay off employees or close, says an analysis by the Senate Fiscal Agency.

In the retailers' experience, food stamp recipients use up most of their benefits during the first half of the month, leaving little or no money for purchases -- including fresh milk and produce -- at the end of the month, the analysis said.

Twice-a-month stamp distribution will help solve those problems, grocers say.

Their analysis makes sense. However, the state Department of Human Services is prudently taking a survey to see what food stamps recipients prefer. Some families, for example, may prefer a full once-a-month payment to buy in bulk at lower prices. The department is neutral on the proposed change to twice-monthly.

Food stamps are distributed by crediting debit cards during the first 10 days of the month based on a recipient's case number.

Another way for the system to be more flexible: Spread the payouts to individual card holders over 20 days instead of 10. That would alleviate the grocer's first-of-month crunch.

Theoretically, computers and procedures could be programmed to let recipients opt to receive funds either once or twice a month.

Meanwhile, any change to the once-a-month system requires approval from Congress, which regulates the process.

The Michigan Senate has passed a bill to set up twice-monthly payments, making the state the first in the country to do so.

Lawmakers figure they can finesse the federal hurdle.

And until the federal government comes up with a more flexible overall system, the twice-a-month proposal is a sound plan to distribute the money and minimize supply problems.

Find this article at:

<http://www.detnews.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20080318/OPINION01/803180312>

☐ Check the box to include the list of links referenced in the article.

© Copyright 2008 The Detroit News. All rights reserved.



Muskegon Chronicle

Earned income credit big boost for poor taxpayers

Tuesday, March 18, 2008

FROM CHRONICLE NEWS SERVICE

AND LOCAL REPORTS

There's a bit of a silver lining for hundreds of thousands of people in the dark cloud of Michigan's economy: Declining wages for many lower-income workers last year likely make more of them eligible for the federal earned income tax credit.

Last year, 665,000 Michigan residents received \$1.2 billion from the credit, in addition to their regular refund from the 2006 tax year, according to the Internal Revenue Service.

With Michigan's economy still slumping, the IRS says there are probably even more people eligible for the credit this year -- and they may not know it.

"It may not be on taxpayers' radar screen, even though they're making less money," IRS spokesman Luis Garcia said. "The economy is hurting in Michigan and more people may qualify for the credit this year."

Also, people who have earned income but are not required to file a tax return may qualify for the credit.

"Certainly for people who are working and just aren't earning a whole lot, it's a great opportunity to take advantage of," said Heidi Sytsema of Muskegon, a certified personal accountant who has volunteered the last few years as a tax preparer for low-income people.

"The government is making this available because they know it's hard for working people to make it," she said.

Those who have already filed tax returns, but think they might be eligible for the credit can amend their returns by filing Form 1040X, Garcia said. Returns can be amended for the previous three tax years.

The IRS says that non-English speakers, nontraditional families, the homeless and rural residents are among those who may not realize they qualify.

Nationally, the IRS estimates as many as one in four taxpayers who are eligible for the credit don't claim it.

The maximum credit for the 2007 tax year is \$4,716 for a family with two or more children, \$2,853 for a family with one child and \$428 if the taxpayer does not reside with children, according to the IRS.

"It's an incredibly important anti-poverty tool, and it's a critical income supplement at a time low- and moderate-income families in Michigan are struggling mightily to make ends meet," said Sharon Parks, vice president for policy for the Lansing-based Michigan League for Human Services.

Sarah Rinsema-Sybenga, director of Sacred Suds, said people crowded in the building Tuesday to get their taxes prepared free of charge. Sacred Suds is one of several local places where people with low incomes can get taxes done for free.

One woman who is on disability and receives Social Security was in tears because she didn't realize she qualified for tax credits.

"The majority of people who come here are the working poor who qualify for the earned income tax credit.

So many people are working a couple of part-time jobs, yet struggling to make ends meet," Rinsema-Sybenga said.

She called the earned income tax credit "a huge economic boost, and it means hope for people who are struggling."

A new state earned-income tax credit that provides eligible filers with 10 percent of the federal credit goes into effect for this tax year.

Taxpayers will be able to claim the credit on their tax returns next year.

The state credit increases to 20 percent of the federal credit in the 2009 tax year.

©2008 Muskegon Chronicle

© 2008 Michigan Live. All Rights Reserved.



Fight ruled out as cause of homeless man's death

Tuesday, March 18, 2008

By Ken Kolker

The Grand Rapids Press

WALKER -- The homeless man who confessed to killing his longtime drinking buddy over the weekend was mistaken, police said Monday.

An autopsy showed Duane Krajkwicz, 45, died from other causes, not the fight with the man originally identified and jailed as his killer, police said.

They said the victim's blood-alcohol level of 0.27 percent -- more than three times the legal limit for traffic cases -- may have contributed to his death.

Police released the other man after holding him for 24 hours following the death early Saturday.

The man told police Krajkwicz died after the two of them fought in a wooded area where they had been living, police said.

"He confessed," Walker Police Chief Catherine Garcia-Lindstrom said at a press conference. "He thought he had killed this individual."

Police responded to reports of a fight around 2 a.m. Saturday in the woods behind a two-story office building, 720 Three Mile Road NW.

They found Krajkwicz and an acquaintance fighting. While police initially referred to the death as a homicide, they later called it suspicious.

Pathologist David Start said he found no evidence the fight caused the death. Krajkwicz suffered scrapes on his right cheek and forehead and a bruised scalp, but no serious injuries, Start said.

He also suffered small fractures in his neck, but nothing to indicate he was strangled, he said.

The victim had evidence of a brain injury sustained in an assault in 2006, which could have led to a seizure, Start said.

"There are a number of other possible reasons for his death, but it was not caused by the fight," he said.

Krajkwicz, formerly of Ludington, moved to the Grand Rapids area two years ago. The fourth of seven children, he had many run-ins with police over the years, his sister said.

State police records show Krajkwicz had a lengthy, if minor, criminal record that started in 1982 with attempted larceny near Ludington and went on to include drug possession, drunken driving and, on Feb. 6, disturbing the peace in Walker.

While he had alcohol problems for years, they became more acute after he lost his parents five years ago, said his sister, Sheila Krajkwicz.

"He just started changing. He was homeless and kept getting beat up," she said.

Council votes to rescind charity boards' residential rules

By Zachary Gorchow • Free Press Staff Writer • March 18, 2008

-
-
- [Print this page](#)
- [E-mail this article](#)

- Share this article:
- [Del.icio.us](#)
- [Facebook](#)
- [Digg](#)
- [Reddit](#)
- [Newsvine](#)
- [What's this?](#)

Updated at 1:02 p.m.

The Detroit City Council has unanimously voted to rescind a controversial new requirement that charities' boards have a majority of their membership comprised of Detroit residents in order to qualify for federal grant money distributed by the city.

ADVERTISEMENT

The resolution will waive the requirement for only this year.

Nonprofit groups have been up in arms since last week, when the council informed 105 of them that they were disqualified from community development block grant and neighborhood opportunity fund monies.

Councilwoman Barbara-Rose Collins, who had defended the requirement, said the charities should be given more time to adjust to it.

"I think it was precipitous in applying it this year," she said.

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, which distributes those funds to local governments, has told the city that if it rescinds the criteria, it will need to hold an abbreviated reapplication process for those groups deemed ineligible and anyone who did not apply.

Groups that were awarded funding by the city would not have to reapply, officials told the council.

There also needs to be sign-off from the administration of Mayor Kwame Kilpatrick to the change. Kerwin Wimberly, the mayor's liaison to the City Council, said the administration is willing to work with the council on the issue.

And the council still needs to formally approve the new plan.

"We blew it, but now we have an opportunity to fix it," said Council President Ken Cockrel Jr.

Find this article at:

<http://www.freep.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20080318/NEWS01/80318033>

☐ Check the box to include the list of links referenced in the article.



Father Fred hopes for overhaul

BY LINDSAY VANHULLE
lvanhulle@record-eagle.com

—

TRAVERSE CITY -- Space is tight at the Father Fred Foundation.

Food donations are sorted in a back room of the nonprofit organization's Hastings Street headquarters, then carted up to the pantry near the front of the building.

The cans and boxes could well pass through a few sets of hands before ever getting into the recipient's grocery bag.

And clothing items are spread throughout two different rooms.

"It's hodge-podge here," said Sharon Buell, a volunteer who receives and sorts clothing. "We're totally separated."

Not for long.

The foundation is in the silent phase of a \$1.3 million capital campaign, the bulk of which is expected to cover a significant overhaul of its facilities. The campaign will go public in May at the same time ground breaks on the renovation.

So far, about \$425,000 has been raised, said David Abeel, the organization's development director.

When it's done, the work will have redesigned the available space -- without adding any square footage -- to create what staff and volunteers hope is a more efficient operation.

"To come here is to realize immediately why," Abeel said. "We're just completely jammed."

The numbers tell a similar story. In the past year, about 1,230 new families came to the foundation. More than \$316,000 was given away in cash assistance, with \$170,000 of that going toward utility bills.

Food and clothing donations both were in the hundreds of thousands of dollars, with the latter up nearly \$200,000 since 2006.

With such need evident in the community, the foundation has grappled with what Abeel calls the "tension" between helping the needy and adding capital improvements.

But staff members say improvements to the nearly 13,000-square-foot facility -- including a drive-up donation center to consolidate drop-off sites, a near-doubling of the food pantry's space and more confidential interview rooms for clients -- will help them better care for those who need it most.

"They'll have less waiting time and they'll have more privacy," said the Rev. Edwin Thome, the foundation's spiritual director.

And any additional money raised through the campaign will go into an endowment fund used to assist clients, Abeel said.

The renovation could result in additional volunteers and expanded service hours, he said, which in turn could grow clientele, especially people from outlying counties.

"Our services are growing," Abeel said. "We can't do much with that until we have a better ability to accommodate people."

Copyright © 1999-2006 cnhi, inc.

Photos



Traverse City residents Richie Ellis, right, and Denny Boehner sort through donated items from a recent food drive at the Father Fred Foundation facilities in Traverse City.



Traverse City resident and volunteer Elizabeth Whelan prepares a care package for a family in need at the Father Fred Foundation in Traverse City. The foundation is in the silent phase of a \$1.3 million capital campaign to fund a renovation of its facilities on Hastings Street.



Oxford mom collecting prom dresses for girls who cannot afford them

By KAREN AUCHTERLONIE
Of The Oakland Press

Lorie Bosetti is hoping to send some Oxford High School girls to their prom who would not have gone otherwise. But first, she needs people to donate prom dresses.

"From talking to some of the kids, we found out many are not able to afford to go to the prom because of parent situations -- losing their jobs, losing their homes," said Bosetti, the mother of a junior at Oxford High School. "Things are just really tight this year."

Bosetti wants to be done collecting dresses by the end of March, but with just a couple of weeks left, she still is far from reaching her goal of 50 dresses.

"I have a bunch pending, but I don't actually have them and I'm still in need of a lot of dresses," Bosetti said.

With Oxford's prom slated for May 2, Bosetti wants to spend the month of April getting the dresses to the girls. She plans on showing them during school lunch periods and selling them on school grounds after the school day ends.

"They will cost \$25 and less, and we do have somebody volunteering to do alterations," Bosetti said.

Proceeds from the sales will be used to offset the cost of the prom, which will be at a banquet center in Rochester.

Bosetti is looking for gently used prom dresses, bridesmaid dresses and other formals.

"For a lot of the girls, they're seniors and this is their chance to go to prom," Bosetti said.

Receipts have been prepared for people who donate dresses so they can receive tax write-offs for their donations.

Contact staff writer Karen Auchterlonie at (248) 745-4643 or karen@oakpress.com.

Click here to return to story:

http://www.theoaklandpress.com/stories/031808/loc_20080318382.shtml



This is a printer friendly version of an article from **Lansing State Journal**. To print this article open the file menu and choose Print.

Published March 18, 2008

Government: High grade for state isn't necessarily wrong, only misleading

Our opinions

The Pew Center on the States is a respected research group. And that's why it's so odd to see the center hand a B+ grade to Michigan for the quality of its state government.

While the politicians who lead state government have highlighted the Pew report, this survey's findings are, in the end, off point. Pew was not judging the quality of Michigan's leadership, which other surveys, such as a recent one by the Michigan Chamber of Commerce, have judged much more harshly.

Michigan scored at least a C+ on all four categories Pew studied: money, people, infrastructure and information. And, to be clear, there are many good stories about state government operations. Every day, thousands of public servants go to work and keep the wheels of government turning.

But there's a disconnect in this report. It's as if Pew was listening to a car's engine while the vehicle's driver was running it off a cliff.

Even with its B+, Michigan is still a state that cannot resolve a structural budget deficit; a state that can't get its hands around a prison funding crisis; a state that had to suspend a student loan program because it couldn't get anyone to buy the government bonds that underwrite new loans.

Then there's this Pew claim: "In addition to examining overall state government, we conducted additional research on two specific state agencies - corrections and the state agency with responsibility for child protective services - both as indicators of a state's performance at the agency level, and as critical functions of state government in their own right."

Pew may have found technical proficiency in these departments, but Michigan still has a Corrections Department that spends far more, per prisoner, than its Midwest neighbors.

And just days after the Pew report came out, the state's auditor general said the Department of Human Services (which runs child protective services) was doing so poorly on public assistance payments, it was costing the state millions. The report pointed the finger at budgetary and staffing shortages.

Front-line state workers only can do so much without quality leadership. And that leads to the results of that chamber survey:

Almost 90 percent of businesspeople responding gave lawmakers a D or worse for their work in 2007.

It's hard for the car to run well if the driver doesn't know how to operate it.